

# Line of Duty

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*Each year, the Air Force communicates the need to stay safety-focused during the 101 Critical Days of Summer, but injury, death, or mission impairment are only part of the reason. Any unsafe act may lead to Line Of Duty (LOD) determinations and considerable consequences for Airmen.*

*A LOD determination is an administrative action conducted after an investigation into the circumstances of an Airman's illness, injury or death.*

*"Along with the Air Force's efforts to promote safety awareness, it's critical to educate all Airmen on the LOD process," said Lt Col Richard Desmond, AFPC judge advocate. "This process is something that affects everyone, not just Airmen who make poor choices or who go absent without leave. If you lead or supervise Airmen, it is imperative you understand this process so you can communicate its intent and possible impact to your troops."*

*Maj Gen Tony Przybyslawski, AFPC commander, and the officer who oversees all enlisted and officer personnel programs for the Air Force, said administrative actions such as the LOD determination can have far reaching implications on Airmen's lives.*

*"I believe most people automatically think of punitive responses to misconduct, and certainly these should be remembered," said General Przybyslawski. "But, while unfavorable information files, loss of rank, or reprimands may affect Airmen's careers, a LOD determination may significantly alter their lives, or the lives of their surviving family members if death occurs. This is not something to take lightly."*

*An LOD seeks to determine if Airmen's actions were outside the LOD or the result of misconduct. The determinant will also consider if the action happened while they were absent without leave.*

*"Because substantial government benefits are at stake, the LOD determination is critical," said Colonel Desmond.*

*These benefits may include disability compensation and retirement, Veterans Administration assistance, Survivor Benefit Plan payments and others.*

*As for the number of LOD instances, personnel from the AFPC legal office determined 24 cases this year included actions either not in the LOD or as a result of misconduct. All told, 11 of the 24 cases resulted in death. Statistics from 2003 show similar numbers as 39 cases provided findings where Airmen's actions were deemed to be outside the LOD, and nine cases resulted in death.*

*"In these cases, no ongoing survivor benefits were paid to family members," said Colonel Desmond.*

*But, death is only part of the issue. When concerning illness or injury, Airmen may face lengthy periods of health care or rehabilitation and often at substantial costs.*

*"All Airmen who become sick or injured on active duty will receive medical care," said Colonel Desmond. "But, once they are discharged, an LOD can prevent them from accruing any further benefits."*

*For more information on LOD determinants, Airmen can contact their base legal offices or consult Air Force Instruction 36-2910.*

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